

Women in Parliament Until Elizabeth's Reign

Seating of American-Born Lady Nancy Astor Recalls Interesting Ancient History and Custom of Peeresses Sending Husbands as Proxies—Others Who Aspire to Seats.



LADY NANCY ASTOR, ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT BY LORD ASTOR

By F. CUNLIFFE-OWEN.

ALTHOUGH Lady Astor has been welcomed in the House of Commons at Westminster during the past week with marked cordiality by its near 700 members, many of whom are among her personal friends, yet the readmission of women to Parliament is exciting a considerable amount of popular misgiving. Two other American born peeresses, the Lady Lee of Fareham, who was Miss Ruth Moore of New York, and the Duchess of Marlborough, daughter of W. K. Vanderbilt, already have announced their intention of following her example and of seeking election to the lower chamber. But there is very little hope or likelihood of the feminine membership of the Commons being restricted in the future to women of their refinement and education.

Now that female franchise is an accomplished fact in Great Britain there is nothing whatsoever to prevent the return to Parliament of ladies of the militant suffragette type who conducted themselves like raving lunatics before the war, setting at defiance all law and order; or the election even of high priestesses of anarchy and Bolshevism of the pestiferous Emma Goldman class. The presence of a few dozen of such creatures in the House, all seeking the unhappy Speaker's eye and bent upon mischief and obstruction, would be sufficient to render legislation at Westminster all but impossible.

Not First Woman Member.

In writing of the "readmission" of women to Parliament I do so advisedly. Lady Astor is very far from being the first of her sex to occupy a seat there, while there was a time when the votes cast by women in Parliament contributed to shape the destinies of England.

Thus in olden days, that is to say in the reigns of the Norman and Plantagenet monarchs, not only peeresses in their own right but also abbesses in their own right held seats in the House of Lords and in the county representative and the burgesses of the cities and towns sat and voted with the peers. Among them were the Countesses of Norfolk, of Pembroke, of Oxford and of Ormonde, and the Abbesses of Wilton, Shaftesbury, St. Mary of Winchester and of Berking.

By the time of the advent of the houses of Lancaster and of York to the throne the peeresses in their own right and the abbesses had fallen into the habit of sending men proxies to represent them in the national legislature in response to the writ of summons from the crown.

This custom became so generally accepted that women disappeared from the councils of the nation, while a commoner wedding a peeress in her own right became, by virtue of his marriage, entitled to a writ of summons to Parliament as her proxy. Thus it is an official record that when Elizabeth, Baroness Talbot, of Kimo, in her own right, died without issue, her husband, William Wimbish, who had until then acted as her representative in Parliament, and had borne her title, was specifically forbidden to make use of the latter any longer, and was denied any further permission to sit and vote for her in the national legislature.

By the time that Queen Elizabeth had been gathered to her fathers and the Stuarts had come to the English throne the crown had abandoned entirely the custom of summoning peeresses in their own right to Parliament to cast their vote there, even by proxy. When some eighteen months ago Lady Rhonda succeeded to the viscountcy of her coal magnate father as a peeress in her own right she lost no time in ascertaining whether or not she would be permitted, as his heiress, to occupy his seat in Parliament; that is to say, in the House of Lords. Before the great war as Lady Mackworth, wife of Sir Humphrey Mackworth, she had occupied the limelight to a considerable extent as a militant suffragette, her activities in that connection landing her on at least one occasion in prison.

With her political antecedents it was only natural that she should endeavor to secure all the parliamentary rights to which she considered herself entitled. Her aspirations, however, were defeated by the discovery that no peer of England, of Great Britain or of the United Kingdom can occupy a seat or cast a vote in the House of Lords without receiving a writ of summons from the Crown to that effect. A certain statutory number of peers of Ireland and Scotland, after having been duly elected by their fellow peers in

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THE LADIES' GRILLE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, LONDON.

COUNTESS MARKIEVICZ, ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT BY THE SINN FEIN, BUT NOT SEATED

these two kingdoms to represent their respective orders in the upper chamber at Westminster, also receive a writ of summons to Parliament; but not those who have failed to be elected.

According to the present Lord High Chancellor, who is the supreme head of the British judiciary and the keeper

of the sovereign's conscience, the long established formula of royal patents creating peerages, a formula which I believe is statutory, does not provide for or specifically authorize the issue of a royal summons to Parliament of a woman possessed of a peerage in her own right, either through creation or inheritance. Several measures have been introduced into the House of Lords, chiefly by younger and impressionable members, calling for the removal of any sex disqualification in their chamber. Some have contended that the patents of the peeresses in their own right now living should be amended in such a fashion as to enable them to receive the royal writ of summons to the House of Lords.

Others argue that the entire matter rests with the sovereign, who, being in legal phraseology the fountain of honor, is supposed to have the right to qualify in any manner in which he may see fit the peerages which he bestows upon men or upon women. But by an overwhelming majority the House of Lords declined to take any of these projects under consideration on the ground that since the upper chamber already has committed itself to a project of drastic reorganization,

MME. MUNCH, FIRST WOMAN MEMBER OF DANISH PARLIAMENT

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the exact extent or nature of which has not yet been wholly determined, it would be premature and untimely to deal with the woman problem at present, as a separate issue. Instead of taking up the matter later as part and parcel of the entire scheme of reorganization of the Lords.

The votes thus virtually tacking the demands made in behalf of Lady Rhonda showed that sentiment in the Glided Chamber is overwhelmingly strong against the readmission of women to participate in its deliberations, and while the verdict has effectively checked the ambitions of Lady Rhonda to speak for the rights of her sex in the House of Lords it has at the same time squelched the pretensions of her mother, the widowed Viscountess Rhonda, to sit and vote in the House of Lords as a peeress not by right of birth or by creation but by marriage.

While women thus are barred from participation in any legislative work in the upper chamber of Parliament, which in olden times they adorned, and are likely to remain excluded in view of the prejudices of the vast majority of the peers of Parliament, they are decidedly adverse to their aspirations—no one can reform or reorganize the House of Lords save itself—it has been decided that there is no longer any legal obstacle to peeresses of the realm either in their own right or by marriage taking part in elections to the House of Commons as voters at the polls or as candidates. The female franchise measure which became law not long ago granted Parliamentary suffrage to all women, without excluding peeresses by marriage or in their own right.

It is thanks to this that the Virginia born Lady Astor, a peeress by marriage, is now occupying a seat and voting in the House of Commons, where she will be joined in the near future by her fellow country women, the Duchess of Marlborough and Lady Lee of Fareham, both New Yorkers, as well as by the younger Lady Rhonda, a peeress in her own right, and by her mother, the widowed Viscountess, a peeress by marriage.

The anomaly of the situation is to be found in the fact that peers are expressly forbidden to take any part in Parliamentary elections, as candidates, as voters at the polls, or even as speakers in behalf of the candidates. Indeed, the brief little speech made by Lord Astor in behalf of his wife at Plymouth at the outset of her political campaign, when he felt himself bound to say a word for her on the ground that he knew her better than anybody else, was a violation of Parliamentary ethics of which her adversaries might have taken advantage under the extremely strict and wise reaching English election laws had they seen fit.

From the very moment that Lord Astor, through his father's death, became a peer of the realm he lost not only his seat in the House of Commons and his Parliamentary franchise but even the right to participate in any Parliamentary election.

Irish Peers Excepted.

The one exception that is made is in favor of Irish peers who are not among the statutory twenty-eight representatives of their order in the House of Lords at Westminster. A non-representative Irish peer may take part in Parliamentary elections and even stand for a constituency in England, Scotland and Wales, but not in Ireland. Lord Palmerston, the celebrated nineteenth century statesman who died as Premier more than half a century ago at considerably over 80 years of age, sat throughout his long and eventful political career in the House of Commons as an Irish Viscount. Peers of Scotland, who are not representatives of their order in the House of Lords, enjoy no such advantages as the peers of Ireland. For they have no Parliamentary franchise and are excluded from the House of Commons. Indeed, they have practically no voice whatsoever in the affairs of the empire.

Another anomaly of the present situation is that although peeresses of the realm in their own right or by marriage may occupy seats in the House of Commons they retain all their legal rights and prerogatives as peeresses. These are numerous and include among other things exemption from the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals of the land. Though sitting in the House of Commons they can only be tried by the House of Lords.

Incidentally it may be said that these prerogatives pertaining to membership of Parliament include absolute and complete freedom of speech without fear of legal consequences. One trembles at the idea of the use to which lady members of the Commons may put this particular privilege, the more so as it always has proved a stumbling block to the members of the House of Commons against woman suffrage. "When a woman has got an idea into her head you cannot knock it out of her," is no use explaining to her and demonstrating to her that she is in the wrong. Instead of replying she simply repeats what she has said before, and so on ad infinitum.

Until the latter portion of the nineteenth century women were admitted to sit among the members of both houses of Parliament at Westminster. True, they did not vote, but they influenced votes. Seated beside masculine and, consequently, susceptible legislators, they displayed no lack of their fascinations in such an alluring way as to induce them to vote in the way that suited their views.

Moreover, in the House of Commons they showed a most amusing disregard for the authority of the Speaker. Indeed, they abused the license thus accorded to them to such an extent that in 1778, two years after the birth of the independence of the United States, matters were brought to a climax.

It was on the occasion of a very important debate, The House of Commons was crowded with women, and the chamber was so deafening and noisy

World Still Menaced by Fires of War in the Near East

Mandates Promise but Temporary Relief at Best and May Serve Only to Complicate the Muddle—Failures of Old Diplomacy a Warning to Coming Conference in London—Is a Solution Possible?

Prof. Jastrow published in 1917 a work on "The War and the Bagdad Railway," in which he set forth, on the basis of lifelong studies of the ancient and modern East, the historic significance of the great highway across Asia Minor and traced the history of the Bagdad Railway from its inception until the outbreak of the great war. In the last chapter of the book he took up the Eastern question and proposed a solution which he now further discusses and elaborates in this article on the basis of the present situation in the Near East as the result of the war.

By MORRIS JASTROW, JR.
(Professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Author of "The War and the Bagdad Railway," etc.)

THE war is not over, nor will it be until the Eastern question has been disposed of. The adjournment of the Paris Conference and the announcement that a special international conference will be held in London to take up the distribution of what was once the Turkish Empire justifies the supposition that the many conversations that must have been held on the subject at Paris during the last ten months among the representatives of the great Powers only revealed the difficulties in the situation, but no solution.

The Eastern question has been officially "solved" so often during the last sixty years and more—since which time it has been the nightmare of European diplomacy—that even an optimist might be disposed to raise the question whether it is capable of solution. It was the Eastern question that brought on the two international conflicts of 1854, the Crimean War, and in 1877, the Russo-Turkish War, in which directly or indirectly all the great European Powers were involved. This same question was the largest single factor in bringing on the war of 1914. Germany and France might have gone on hating each other and growing at each other without ever involving the world in a conflict to settle their difficulties. German officers might have gone on giving vent to their feelings toward England by drinking toasts to "Der Tau" without that day ever dawning, certainly without issu-

ing in a death and life encounter between two mutually exclusive ideals. If the Austrian Archduke had been assassinated in Berlin or Vienna in the conventional form of royal murders, by an anarchist or a demented individual, Germany would not have had the opportunity to embroil the world. It was the introduction of the Eastern question into the murder that gave Germany the chance to egg on Austria and to bait Russia, with whom as the backer of the Slav States of southeastern Europe a clash of arms was inevitable in order to clear the track for German schemes looking to the domination of the Near East. Serbia blocked the way to the Bagdad Railway and hence Austria was urged to hold Serbia responsible for the murder.

Issue Still Unsettled.

A year after the armistice the world is still confronted with the question that brought on the crisis. The decision on the western front has removed the menace of Prussian militarism and of German world domination, but it has not settled the issue which lay behind the Pan-Germanic schemes for the control of the Near East. If no solution is found by the proposed London conference, the outward appearance of peace among European Powers may be maintained for some years; but the conflict, like a smoldering fire, will go on, with the possibility of bursting forth into flames at almost any moment.

The coming London Conference will represent the third attempt to settle the situation arising out of the prolonged process of the dissolution of the Turkish Empire. The two previous attempts—the Paris Conference of 1856 and the Berlin Congress of 1878—were hailed with considerable enthusiasm as capable of settling the Eastern question, but the conference settled nothing except the certainty of further bloody conflict over the division of the spoils.

The conferences of 1856 and 1878 were doomed to failure because the guiding principle was false, and a false principle in diplomacy means a wrong result. The question that confronts the world is, Whether the third con-

ference is going to furnish another attempt to solve the Eastern question by the same method which led to dismal failure on two previous occasions.

The situation points that way. It is idle to close one's eyes to obvious facts, and if any further evidence were needed to demonstrate the complete failure of the Old World diplomacy in dealing with the Eastern question it could be found in the secret treaties, declarations and agreements made during the war by the Entente with Italy, Russia, Japan, the Arabs and the Zionists—and apparently also (though this is not definite) with the Greeks. These treaties, declarations and agreements are responsible for the appalling situation in the Near East after the war.

It now transpires that early in the war England pledged herself, subject to due recognition of French interest in Syria, to aid in the restoration of a great Arab State, which was to extend from Arabia proper northward to the Taurus range, to include Aleppo and Damascus as well as Palestine, and to embrace Mesopotamia in the East. The head of this State was to be the Sheriff of Mecca, with his title changed to the King of the Hedjaz, the name of the district along the Red Sea. This enormous territory is now claimed by Prince Faisal as the representative of the newly formed Arab State. Naturally, such an agreement provoked ill feelings between the Syrians and Arabs, since the Syrians did not relish the thought of being controlled by an Arab chieftain of Mecca.

The French, too, who had exercised a beneficent and semi-official protection over the Christians of Syria for about sixty years, and who had large commercial and religious interests in Syria, did not look with favor upon the formation of a large Arab State encroaching on what they considered their domain, and the policy of which would be directed from London. To still further charge the atmosphere the British Government recognized the claims of Zionists to Palestine to the extent of favoring the reconstitution of that country as a national home for the Jews. Though the language of the declaration of Mr. Balfour in No-

vember, 1917, was guarded, it was interpreted to mean that Palestine was eventually to become a Jewish State.

The result was to arouse the opposition of the native Mohammedans of Palestine and Syria, some 600,000, who were bitterly disappointed, after being freed from the Turkish yoke, to be asked to face submission to a new one or, as an alternative, to be driven to the wall by a large immigration into a land not capable of holding more than double the present population. Prince Faisal added fuel to the fire by claiming that Palestine was to be included in his Arab State; and as if all this were not sufficient, now comes the agreement between Italy and the Entente to give Italy, as the condition of her entering the war on the side of the Allies, a share of Asia Minor on which she had long cast her eyes—the southern shore and the Dodecanese Islands. This, naturally, did not find favor with the Greek population, which is considerable along the entire coast from Syria down. They ask the embarrassing question why they should come under Italian domain and put in a claim for Greek control of the coast line of Asia Minor with some "hinterland."

British Virtual Governor.

The change in the situation brought about by the successful campaigns of the English in Mesopotamia and Palestine has made England the virtual governor of these regions pending the settlement of the Turkish question, while France has anticipated the decision of the conference in regard to Syria by sending Gen. Gouraud to take command of the two important ports of Beirut and Alexandretta and the intervening coast territory in the hope that the hinterland, up to Damascus at least, will be brought under French control.

The Turks, too, have been heard from. Demonstrations have taken place in Constantinople and elsewhere against the dissolution of the empire. Having forced their yoke for many centuries on peoples foreign to them they know from the experiences which they imposed upon others how distasteful it is to a people to be regarded as a political dependency. It is

hardly to be expected that any people will submit to be wiped out as a political factor without some struggle, and the Turk is a fighter as well as a hater. The reports that reach us from time to time of renewed hostilities of the Turks against the unhappy Armenians reflect the kind of activity going on in territory still under Turkish control.

Such, in brief, is the situation brought about by the continuation of the war of the oldtime spirit that attempted to settle the Near Eastern question in 1856 and 1878. The only differences between then and now is a balance in favor of a greater muddle at the present time. Unless, therefore, an entirely different principle is set up at the coming London conference nothing is to be expected except further outbursts of fanaticism of the Turks against Greeks and Armenians, an outbreak of hostilities between Greeks and Italians, a rising up of Palestinian Mohammedans against the Jews and of Syrian natives against the ambitions of the Arabs.

A gloomy outlook indeed, almost justifying the cynical prophecy that another war will have to be fought to end the war resulting from the attempt to end all wars.

Is there any way out of the muddle, or must it be confessed that the Eastern question, which is now synonymous with the problem of what to do with the remains of what was once the Turkish Empire, is really incapable of solution?

The Paris conference has brought into the foreground what appears to be a new principle—mandates, instead of division of the spoils. The lands once under Turkish control are to be divided up into natural divisions and each division is to be entrusted to some power to act as a guardian and to be responsible to the League of Nations. The panacea sounds attractive and it may be admitted that it does represent a decided advance on the former policy, which can only be characterized as political exploitation of the East.

But when we come to the distribution of the mandates among the Powers the inherent weakness of the new plan shows itself in the difficult-

ties to be encountered—difficulties that are almost, if not entirely, insurmountable. There are only three possible candidates for mandates in the Near East: England, France and the United States. Italy and Japan would hardly be regarded as being in position to compete for the distinction. By an obvious division England must assume the mandate for Mesopotamia and Palestine, and France for Syria, which leaves Armenia and the rest of Asia Minor to be disposed of. I leave the new Arab State out of consideration for the present, though if that State is also to be placed under a mandate the only logical candidate is again England.

The United States meets with general favor as the mandate power for Armenia, but it is becoming more and more apparent that it would be unwise, as well as, in many respects, not practicable, to apportion Armenia and the rest of Asia Minor among two Powers, though if this were done one hardly sees how any other decision can be reached except to give England, again, the mandate over Constantinople and what remains of Turkey in Asia Minor.

A mandate involves practical control of the country in question as long as the mandate lasts. With the European Powers still wedded to the old diplomatic methods as evidenced by the treaties, agreements and declarations made during the war, neither France nor Italy can be expected to grow enthusiastic at the prospect of seeing England thus in control of the entire stretch of highway across Asia Minor, for the United States as the mandate of Armenia would, because of our close relations with England, be an additional support rather than a counterbalance.

Same Old Problem Again.

We would then have precisely the situation the prospect of which through the Pan-Germanic scheme brought on the war, to wit, a single Power dominating the East to so large an extent as to overshadow the others, with this difference, to be sure, that England would carry out her task with far greater consideration for other nations and with far greater benefits to the rest of the world than would have been the case if Germany had succeeded in her endeavor. [The Eastern question is not solved by substituting one possible control by a single Power for another.]

But England herself—so it is authoritatively stated—does not desire any

Continued on Sixth Page.

Continued on Sixth Page.